

2018 NAMI Georgia Legislative Priorities

NAMI Georgia is an affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a grassroots organization dedicated to support, advocate, educate, and support research for individuals and families affected by mental illness. NAMI Georgia has eighteen local affiliates across the state.

Ensure Mental Health Parity in Georgia

The federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 requires health plan policies and practices covering behavioral health services be no more restrictive than those covering medical/surgical services. However, Georgia currently has no mechanism to measure or enforce the federal Parity Act.

SUPPORT the Georgia Parity PEACH Act, which gives the Office of the Insurance Commissioner oversight to measure and hold insurance companies accountable for parity.

Maximize Federal Opportunities to Increase the Insured Population of Georgia

With a focus on funding and parity for mental health services, an increase in Medicaid access allows people with mental illness to participate in Georgia's work force. It removes barriers by allowing people to qualify based on income, rather than on disability determination. This is essential to the path to work and self-sufficiency.

EXPAND opportunities by leveraging state funds to access federal Medicaid dollars and by maintaining existing mental health Medicaid codes.

End Unnecessary Incarceration of Individuals with Mental Illness

Disproportionate numbers of people with mental illness are in our criminal and juvenile justice systems, often as a result of untreated or undertreated illness. As a result, jails and juvenile justice facilities have become the *de facto* mental health institutions of our day. NAMI Georgia's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program, pre-arrest diversion, and accountability courts are proven methods to reduce the burden on the criminal and juvenile justice systems and the state of Georgia.

INCREASE the number of accountability courts in Georgia to divert mentally ill non-violent offenders to treatment, and SUPPORT CIT by reinstating DBHDD funding for NAMI Georgia to help coordinate advocates for CIT training.

Invest in Funding for Mental Health

Georgia is ranked 47th in funding for adults. We must increase revenue and supports.

- **Children & Youth** – FOLLOW the Governor's Commission on Children's Mental Health recommendations. SUPPLEMENT Georgia's federal grant for CSC (Coordinated Specialty Care: case management, medication & primary care coordination, therapy, and family education) to expand early psychosis programs.
- **Access** - INCREASE access to mental health care for all Georgians by funding telemedicine initiatives and expanding the Georgia Crisis & Access Line.
- **Co-Occurring Disorders** – APPROVE allocations for targeted pilot programming, for opioid antidotes & therapeutic treatment centers, and for additional Behavioral Health Crisis Centers.
- **Military & Veterans** – IMPROVE the claims process at VA clinics, as well as the assistance provided to those awaiting a disability designation.
- **Affordable Housing** – ALLOCATE funding for programs to expand supported and assisted housing initiatives for those with mental illness. PROVIDE additional assistance to youth homeless shelters to increase educational and psychosocial support.
- **Family Caregivers** – CONTINUE funding, through DBHDD, to NAMI Georgia, whose volunteers annually educate and support over 10,000 Georgians affected by mental health conditions, with no cost to the public.